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Irony and Point of View in *"That Evening Sun"*

LEONARD H. FREY

In approaching the general tone of "That Evening Sun," I cite a remark by Professor Edgar Johnson, in his anthology, *A Treasury of Satire,* about Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass:* "[The novels] reveal the grown-up world through the eyes of a child. Dreamlike and distorted with the child's innocent ignorance, they are filled with strange and unintelligible happenings because so much of what happens to a child is mysterious to it." Now, it is a very far cry indeed from Looking-Glass land to Jefferson, Miss., but this comment is in a sense applicable to Faulkner's story. The action narrated by Quentin Compson has occurred some years in the past, but Faulkner brings the past into the present, and Quentin conveys the story in the speech of a child and with childish perceptions. He is himself an important performer in the story and a narrator who sees but cannot fully interpret. This, we shall see, is integral to the structure, which derives a fine irony from the discrepancy.

The first general incident that indicates the direction of the story—the arrest of Nancy, her scene with Stovall, and her imprisonment—stems from Quentin's initial description of Nancy (". . . tall, with a high, sad face sunken a little where her teeth were missing"), in that it does tell, on the level of Quentin's childish comprehension, "how she lost her teeth." But more significantly, the incident suggests a number of things about Nancy, the chief character and the "victim" of the story. She has prostituted herself for a white man, and she expects the money owed her for the act. She wants her due, and later on she will accede to what she will wearily suppose her just fate. When she thinks of suicide in prison and the jailor cuts her down, it is noted that "she didn't have anything to tie her hands with and she couldn't make her hands let go of the window ledge." Also, that she was drugged "with

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cocaine and not whiskey, because no nigger would try to commit suicide unless he was full of cocaine, because a nigger full of cocaine wasn't a nigger any longer." Nancy, then, expects measure for measure; she also manifests an inherent fear of death.

It is not until some time after this that Quentin, the only one of the Compson children ever really to do so, vaguely feels something amiss about Nancy. He notices, but fails to understand, Nancy's pregnancy; and he knows, without knowing *why,* that Jesus, Nancy's husband, is persona non grata. Some tenuous, almost unconscious doubt suggests itself:

> "What is it?" I said. "What is it?"
>
> "I ain't nothing but a nigger," Nancy said. "It ain't none of my fault."
>
> She looked at me, sitting in the chair before the cold stove, the sailor hat on her head. I went back to the library. It was the cold stove and all, when you think of a kitchen being warm and busy and cheerful.

I cite this passage because it focuses so well on the limits of Quentin's young understanding, and on the specialness of that understanding. Caddy and Jason differ from Quentin, though they are in a position to see just as much of the story as it unfolds; the former is ignorantly inquisitive, and no more, and the latter knows and cares nothing about Nancy's plight. Mr. and Mrs. Compson, of course, understand, but he is impotent to act, though he would like to help, and she is simply too self-centered to care. And when it is recalled that Dilsey, too, understands, but can do nothing, we have a household which can but play spectator to the tragedy.

The contrast between the man's world and the child's world intensifies as the story progresses. The quarrel between Caddy and Jason counterpoints the remarks of Mr. Compson and Nancy, during the walk

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in the dark; when Nancy remains true to her belief in measure for measure:

> "Jesus always been good to me," Nancy said. "Whenever he had two dollars, one of them was mine." . . .
>
> The lane was always dark. "This is where Jason got scaired on Hallowe'en," Caddy said.
>
> "I didn't," Jason said . . .
>
> "If you'd behave yourself, you'd have kept out of this," Father said. "But it's all right now. He's probably in St. Louis now. Probably got another wife by now and forgot all about you."
>
> "If he has I better not find out about it," Nancy said. "I'd stand there right over them, and every time he wropped her, I'd cut that arm off. I'd cut his head off and I'd slit her belly and I'd shove—"
>
> "Hush," Father said.
>
> "Slit whose belly, Nancy?" Caddy said.
>
> "I wasn't scaired," Jason said. "I'd walk right down this lane by myself."
>
> "Yah," Caddy said. "You wouldn't dare to put your foot down in it if we were not here too."

Here, we are presented with a situation which in tone is not entirely unlike certain of the scenes on the moor in "King Lear," where Edgar, Lear, and the Fool make their remarks felt in terms of the varying degrees of awareness of their position.

The final moments of the story derive their effectiveness from a fusion of these previously mentioned elements, relating to Nancy herself and to the disparity between her world and the children's. Quentin only tentatively divines something wrong ("There was something about Nancy's house; something you could smell besides Nancy and the house."); Nancy's terror (and her final resignation), conditioned by a profusion of details which seem perfectly matter-of-fact to Quentin but which are literally of life-and-death significance to her, becomes intensified by this ambivalence of appearance and reality; perfectly ordinary objects and accidents assume symbolic properties:

> "Your hand is on that hot globe," Caddy said. "Don't it feel hot to your hand?"
>
> Nancy looked at her hand on the lamp chimney. She took her hand away, slow. She stood there, looking at Caddy, wringing her long hand as though it were tied to her wrist with a string.
>
> * * *
>
> Caddy took the popper out of the fire.

"It's burned up," she said. "You'll have to get some more popcorn, Nancy."

"Did you put all of it in?" Nancy said.

"Yes," Caddy said. Nancy looked at Caddy.

With the background Faulkner has constructed, this passage is a prime example of the real lack of communication which adds irony to the tragedy.

When someone approaches Nancy's cabin, she sweats in her terror, and Quentin observes, "She's not crying." Nancy repeats this, but when she says it she is recalling her private code: measure for measure. In other words, Nancy, with her exact knowledge of the situation, restates what Quentin has exclaimed in his ignorance of the situation; and thereby the worlds of adult and child come together as they must, dissonantly. And it is not at all detrimental to the structure of the story that Nancy's terse preparedness for death here should give way one last time to desperate pleading, which appears to the children as desire to oblige them. Caddy's and Jason's previous assertions that they must go home have served as direst threats to her; but the only threatening quality they can understand is the threat of Jason, "I'm going to tell."

Finally, when Mr. Compson is about to leave with the children, and after Nancy has determined for herself the futility of any escape (for it should be remembered that Nancy's conception of escape is limited to her immediate surroundings and what she knows: the Compson house, Aunt Rachel's, and her own cabin), she herself enunciates the idea which has lurked in the background of this entire episode and which surely underlies the title of the story: "I scaired of the dark . . . I scaired for it to happen in the dark." Jason has feared the dark; that has been the substance of Caddy's taunting. And now, the conscious adult has adopted the sentiments of the unconscious child.

The last bitter irony of the situation is Quentin's remarks on Lovelady, the insurance man. Nancy has just said, "Anyway, I got my coffin money saved up with Mr. Lovelady." Quentin, who by now has at least heard such suggestive words as blood, razor, and coffin, thinks of the man Lovelady himself, rather than of what he may have to do with Nancy. And the Lovelady digression is heightened by a suicide and (presumably) a death Quentin cannot perceive as such. In short, matter ostensibly irrelevant to the story at this point is introduced, not only because of its suggestion of death, but also because the matter-of-factness of the narrative relies on unequal forces being treated equally

with the heart of the tragic plot. After this digression, Quentin poses the one question he asks in the entire story: "Who will do our washing now, Father?" This is rather significant, if we consider what Quentin has actually understood of the story he has related. He deduces that Nancy is going away—she has said so. Like Caddy, he doubtless assumes that Jesus is mad at Nancy. He has seen, if not understood, Nancy's pregnancy. He has seen, or heard of, the quarrel between Nancy and her white "lover." He seems to understand that Nancy does not want to be alone, but he does not, of course, know just why. Quentin, then, has presented all the materials of the tragedy except for the murder itself (and we hear of this in *The Sound and the Fury*); but the impression he derives from the material and that which we derive is both quantitatively and qualitatively different. Quantitatively, he deduces some sort of leave-taking between Nancy and his family; he assumes Nancy will no longer be available for laundry-duty. To his comprehension, departure simply does not correlate with death. Qualitatively, he notices the incidents he relates, in themselves, not synthetically. If he were to synthesize these incidents, his comprehension would necessarily be of death rather than of departure. It is possible that I have totally misread Quentin's question, in which case the intensity of the closing scene—Nancy waiting in her open cabin—has forced real understanding upon him; but I think my reading is correct, that his question reveals him still tangential to the real situation.

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From these considerations, by which I have interpreted the story, I proceed to further issues that contribute to the success of the presentation. Of first importance is probably the suggestive power of what appear as further manifestations of Quentin's childishness. He describes Nancy's head with the laundry bundle atop it as "rigid, uptilted, the bundle steady as a rock or a balloon." Now, rocks and balloons are hardly congruous, but the balloon is an image natural to a child. Quentin also describes Nancy's pregnancy as "her belly already swelling out a little, like a little balloon." In other words, the images of the story are what children would think of and understand for themselves. That is why Jesus' remark "that it was a watermelon that Nancy had under her dress" can lead to Caddy's question, "Off of what vine?" a question not directly addressed to the problem because the child's metaphors are not the adult's, even though the words or phrases may be identical. When the words or phrases do come together, as with the previously mentioned "She's not crying" and "I scaired of the dark" moments, the tension demanded by the situation is perfectly established. Another example of this child-responsiveness is the following: "Why is Nancy afraid of Jesus?" Caddy said. "Are you afraid of Father, Mother?" Facts, as well as images, have their place in the children's experience, and Caddy knows Jesus and Nancy are husband and wife. If it is not pursued too far as symbolism, there is a fine irony in some of Caddy's and Quentin's remarks on Nancy's husband:

> "Maybe she's waiting for Jesus to come and take her home," Caddy said.
>
> "Jesus is gone," I said. Nancy told us how one morning she woke up and Jesus was gone.
>
> * * *
>
> They said she (Aunt Rachel) was Jesus' mother. Sometimes she said she was and sometimes she said she wasn't any kin to Jesus.
>
> * * *
>
> "Was it Jesus?" Caddy said. "Did he try to come into the kitchen?"
>
> "Jesus," Nancy said. Like this: Jeeeeeeesus, until the sound went out, like a match or a candle does.
>
> "It's the other Jesus she means," I said.

I have hinted before at the elliptical quality of Quentin's perceptions, which are at the same time so focused as to bring home to us the readers precisely what we require as the materials of the tragedy. (It might

even be paradoxically argued that the pervasiveness of Quentin's reactions and perceptions in the story make the real plot itself elliptical, somewhat in the tone of Ring Lardner's "Haircut." But to do so is to direct attention away from the tragedy and onto the narrator—which overshifts the emphasis. The tragedy tempered by the narrator is the problem in the Faulkner story.) This quality is wonderfully in evidence in the portrayal, within but a few lines, of Mr. and Mrs. Compson. Granted, an acquaintance with them by way of *The Sound and the Fury* assists in appreciating their portraits here, but it is not essential; they are completely revealed and completely defined within the limits of the short story. Such remarks by Mr. Compson as "You know I am not lying outside with a razor" (to Mrs. Compson) and "You mean you're going to sit right here with the lamp lighted? . . . Ah, damnation. Come along, chillen. It's past bedtime" (to Nancy), when taken in the context of the story, perfectly indicate his perception and disillusionment. And Mrs. Compson manifests perfect self-absorption in (1) her reaction to Nancy's plight ("You'll leave me alone, to take Nancy home? Is her safety more precious to you than mine?"); and (2) her reaction to sheltering Nancy ("I can't have Negroes sleeping in the bedrooms.")

I do not propose a detailed comparison here, but a story in some respects comparable to "That Evening Sun," namely Hemingway's "The Killers," offers certain points of reference, that may better define the nature and accomplishment of the Faulkner story. Nick Adams, like Quentin, is exposed to a tragic situation, one which depends for its vividness on the tension of the lunch-room scene and on the futility of Nick's visit to Ole Andreson; indeed, Nick is as impotent to stay the tragedy as are the Compsons, and the sense of inevitability in the one story equals that of the other. But in the emphasis accorded the various persons and elements in the two stories, "That Evening Sun," I think, emerges as the superior work. For although it is in no wise necessary that we know the "background" of the tragedy in "The Killers," as we do in "That Evening Sun," the fact is that Hemingway has not placed the emphasis of his plot upon the tragic object. Ole is brilliantly defined for us in the few lines devoted to Nick's seeking him out, but Nick, and not he, seems to be the central figure of the story. The excellence of the presentation of the gunmen demands a more clearly defined tragic core for the plot; and although the potential of this tragic core exists in the characterization of Ole, the emphasis may be said to be away from his plight and on the effect of the gunmen's

visit. If I may be pardoned the analogy of a hammer and an anvil, I should say that Hemingway presents the hammer, the tragic force, superlatively well, but pays attention to matters other than the anvil that must receive the force of the hammer-blow. In contrast to this, Nancy, the "anvil" in Faulkner's plot, is surely the dominant figure of the story; Quentin as narrator determines the tone the story takes, as I have endeavored to show, but he himself does not dominate the story. Nancy is always before our eyes, and when we leave her we are aware that we have been shown a richly developed, clearly defined tragic object.

I hope I have indicated what seems to me to be the strength of "That Evening Sun"—the use of narration to present exactly what we need to understand and evaluate the situation; while the narration itself manifests a dimension, Quentin's comprehension of what he tells, which adds a stress of its own. The irony of some of the great ballads—"The Twa Corbies," and "The Wife of Usher's Well," among others—derives at least in part from just such a dimension in the narration, where material is presented objectively, but where the triangular rapport of understanding between object, narrator, and reader (or listener) is unequal, the reader understanding a dimension in the object which the narrator does not understand. Naturally, this is the intention of the ballad-maker: by moving the appearance away from the reality of the situation, he intensifies the reality. Faulkner has made Quentin the unequal angle in the triangle of rapport in "That Evening Sun," with the result that the distortion makes the "Quentin angle" in its own way as rich as the "Nancy angle." From Quentin's early remark about Nancy, that "she couldn't make her hands let go of the window ledge," to the closing "We left her sitting before the fire," Faulkner has conjured up a world of terror, unabsorbed by the child and all the more terrible to us because of this.

The Shakespearean Symbolism in *The Sound and The Fury*

MARJORIE RYAN

Irving Howe's book, *William Faulkner: A Critical Study*, contains many insights into *The Sound and the Fury*. His comments on the

Quentin section, pointing up the complexities of Quentin's character and the apparent ambiguity of Faulkner's attitude toward him, are especially thought-provoking. I cannot, however, agree with Howe's interpretation of Faulkner's intentions in the Quentin section, nor, consequently, with his criticism of Faulkner's techniques.

Howe says that Quentin is a clinical case whom Faulkner valiantly but vainly tries to present as a Hamlet figure. He feels that Quentin is the victim of a peculiar obsession, which is partly a problem of his sexual life and partly a problem of family or caste pride, and that Faulkner does not succeed in establishing the undoubted relationship between Quentin's "chastity neurosis" and the crumbling Compson world. Yet, Howe believes, the whole section, and particularly the continued debate between father and son, requires us to assume that Quentin is meant to be taken seriously as "a center of intelligence, an ethical agent and critic." Quentin is "too weak, too passive, too bewildered, to be a sensitive hero;" and Howe feels that the symbolism by which Faulkner tries to give his experiences meaning and universality is in many instances artificial and literary and hence unsuccessful.

I think Howe claims both too much and too little for Quentin. He is surely not intended to be the "hero" in the sense that his attitudes are Faulkner's any more than Jason's or the older Compsons' are Faulkner's, or in the sense that his view of his family or of life is any more inclusive than their views. It is intentionally presented as being just as fatally distorted, in a different way; and Faulkner goes beyond it as he goes beyond the views of the others. There is no self-conscious protagonist in *The Sound and the Fury*. Benjy and Dilsey live Faulkner's philosophy, and Faulkner's presentation of them as living it is in itself part of the book's meaning. Quentin is a critic of Compson life chiefly in the sense that his experience is a criticism of it.

I do not think, therefore, that the Shakespearean symbolism in the Quentin section can be intended to place Quentin on a level with the tragic hero, although it must be intended to indicate some relationship between them. I agree with Howe that the relationship is not sharply ironic: Faulkner's attitude toward Quentin is never predominantly ironic, not even when he prepares to end his tormented existence like a Southern gentleman, with hat and teeth clean. The nature of the relationship becomes clearer if we look at the Shakespearean symbolism not as identifying Quentin with Hamlet or any other particular Shakespearean hero, but as identifying his attitude with Macbeth's attitude

in the passage from which the book takes its title—as developing and deepening the themes of futility, disintegration, death introduced in the Benjy section.

Howe says that there are repeated "crafty" references to Hamlet in the Quentin section. He mentions only the time symbolism and Quentin's debates with his father; and I cannot find any other references that might be interpreted as relating only to Hamlet, although it may well be that I have missed the craftier ones. There is, of course, an echo of Hamlet in Quentin's indecisiveness, in his brooding introspection, in his concern with incest. But incest is a classic tragic theme; and is not every tragic hero indecisive, brooding, and introspective?

The dominant Shakespearean symbolism, including the time symbolism, can be related directly to Macbeth's speech. Although the visit to the watchmaker may be, as Howe thinks, an arbitrary bit of business, the broken watch, which has measured the family's disintegration and is now ticking away the last syllables of recorded time for Quentin, is an adequate minor symbol. A major symbol is the walking shadow which Quentin becomes in the course of his wanderings through Cambridge. The references to his shadow are introduced casually and simply, but they acquire symbolic force by repetition and by their relationship to Quentin's mental condition. He is finally the very embodiment of life as Macbeth sees it—empty, meaningless, futile.

We would not call Quentin a Macbeth figure, despite this concentration of symbols: they are obviously focussed on the attitude of tragic despair. For the same reason, the echoes of Hamlet's experiences remain only echoes. The dominant note is the despair at evil within and without, against which every tragic hero struggles and which overwhelms Quentin; the muted but significant undertones are all the connotations of tragic nobility of spirit. If the Shakespearean symbolism, which thus re-sounds and extends the death symbolism of the Benjy section and elevates Quentin even while revealing his limitations, is not justified in terms of his experiences, then it is, as Howe says, artificial and unacceptable. I think it is justified.

Quentin is the only morally responsible Compson who is capable of deep and tragic emotions, because he is the only Compson who retains any conception of the morally valid principles underlying the code of honor to which they all react. Howe sees in Faulkner's work a gradual shift in emphasis from "honor" (what a man is in relationship to his society) to "integrity" (what he is in himself). In these

terms, Quentin is the only Compson still concerned with integrity. Mrs. Compson maintains the family honor by forbidding Caddy's name to be mentioned and by allowing Caddy's daughter to be destroyed; Mr. Compson has long since lost any belief in integrity and surveys human folly through an alcoholic mist; Jason has never had a concept of either honor or integrity. Quentin alone has any grasp of the moral issues involved in the disintegration of the family and in Caddy's self-betrayal and any awareness of the responsibilities of one human being toward another.

If it were not for the moral purpose behind Quentin's aberration, and if we were not reminded of it by the undertones in the Shakespearean symbolism, he would not be, as he is, the most appealing of the doomed Compsons. His meeting with the little girl, which seems to me to provide another parallel with the Benjy section, would not have the meaning it has. Howe sees this incident as reflecting in ironic reverse Quentin's problem (his ambiguous feelings, bordering on incestuous desire, for his sister). But Benjy is accused of attacking a little girl whom he approaches with a confused memory of Caddy and the love she has given him. And the most healthy relationship in which we see Quentin engaged (not sought by him, because he no longer seeks relationships with others, but accepted by him) is misinterpreted in the same way. The world's attitude toward these parallel incidents is another indication of the loss of love which Benjy and Quentin mourn in their own ways.

Certainly there is nothing positive in Quentin's actions. The moral impulse is perverted and immobilized. When he fails ignominiously in his only forthright attack on callousness and indifference, in his abortive fight with Dalton Ames, he retreats into himself. The result is a sort of moral paralysis. He cannot put into effect his fantastic plan to save Caddy—he cannot, like Macbeth, commit direct moral suicide. He cannot, like Hamlet, finally act to destroy the evil that has destroyed him—the evil is too general and pervasive. And he cannot compromise. He is in the tragic dilemna but cannot find the tragic solution; and his death accomplishes nothing but his defeat.

The Sound and the Fury is essentially a negative and pessimistic book, with faint undertones of the positive and optimistic; and the Quentin section is of the same pattern. In the book as a whole, we have only Dilsey; in the Quentin section we have only the Shakespearean symbolism and its implications. And just as Dilsey saves the book as a

whole from utter darkness, so the Shakespearean symbolism in a way saves Quentin. It makes him not a victim of a chastity neurosis placed in sharp ironic contrast to the tragic hero, but rather, to maintain the symbolism, the shadow of a tragic hero.

News and Comments

The editors hope that *Faulkner Studies* will serve as a kind of clearing house or central exchange for the discussion of "work in progress," and provide a medium that makes available ideas, questions and information which seem pertinent to our readers. With the beginning of the new academic year we hope for—and invite—more contributions of this kind.

William Van O'Connor's new book, *The Tangled Fire of William Faulkner,* to be published by the University of Minnesota Press, probably in January, will be reviewed in the next issue of *Faulkner Studies.*

The publication date of *Mirrors of Chartres Street* has been delayed. Readers therefore have an opportunity, until October 15, to take advantage of the pre-publication price. Since the number of copies printed will be small, we urge readers to send in their orders early. *Mirrors of Chartres Street,* as announced before, is a collection of early Faulkner stories and sketches, written in New Orleans in 1925. For further information, see p. 37.

This issue's contributors: Leonard H. Frey is a Teaching Fellow at the University of Oregon. His essay was originally delivered in Cleanth Brooks' course on Contemporary Literature at Yale. Marjorie Ryan is a teaching assistant in the Department of English at the University of Minnesota. Bradley T. Perry's "Faulkner Critics: A Bibliography Breakdown" will be continued in the next issue.

Bibliography

Our intention in the annotated bibliography has been to publish first data that the base sources to which we referred in our first issue do not list, and then, upon exhaustion of this material, to return to the base sources. In this issue we have relied almost exclusively on the excellent bibliography

to be found in *William Faulkner: Two Decades of Criticism,* edited by Frederick J. Hoffman and Olga W. Vickery, Michigan State College Press, 1951. The eventual aim is a complete annotated bibliography of Faulkner criticism, and as everyone experienced in bibliography knows, such an effort at completeness entails extensive research. Readers are therefore invited to submit names of articles which may have eluded our bibliographers.

Adams, Robert M., "Poetry in the Novel: or, Faulkner Esemplastic," *The Virginia Quarterly Review,* 29: 419-434, Summer, 1953.

Coleridge defines a poet as one who possesses the "esemplastic," or unifying, power of the imagination. Oddly, he scorned prose fiction, and did not see that some writers of it would fulfill his definition of a poet. Among modern American novelists, William Faulkner is most truly "esemplastic," as is best demonstrated by "The Sound and the Fury."

In this novel, a balance of discordant qualities is achieved, since against the degradation of Benjy and Jason are set the positive values of Quentin and Dilsey. Yet the myths of chivalric honor and Christian stoicism which they represent have only esthetic value; and the novel, as the title implies, is an "artificial construct" signifying nothing. That it is so, however, only enforces the central theme: that science has reduced morality to mere folklore and left man mythless, and that order is only in the mind. The "esemplastic" achievement consists in the building from the depths of human nature, seen in the chaotic mind of Benjy, to a kind of height found in Dilsey. The final episode, which seems anticlimactic, only reemphasizes the journey the novel has taken —through chaos and darkness back to daylight and order—for it brings Benjy back only from an unfamiliar to a familiar chaos. Thus one predominant thought pervades, reducing multiplicity of character, incident, and styles to unity of effect. (R.A.)

Arthos, John, "Ritual and Humor in the Writing of William Faulkner," *Accent,* 9:17-30, Autumn, 1948. (This essay is reprinted in *William Faulkner: Two Decades of Criticism.*)

For Faulkner, writing is a "kind of consecration"—as such, his characters are involved in ritual and dedication, and are aware of their roles as symbols. Faulkner is forced, by his belief, to do more than relate his story: he must comment upon it, interpreting and divulging the mystery of the ritual. "The Bear" describes the ritual of a boy's growing up: a ritual which is seen, inevitably, to embody the mystery and violence of history. In *As I Lay Dying,* Faulkner successfully combines a wry humor with the seriousness of the ritual. The characters may appear to be absurd, but the heroic joke is too fierce to be altogether humorous. Much of

Faulkner's work would probably have been more successful in a comic form rather than as wild rhetoric with an admixture of comic comment. (J.B.)

Chase, Richard, "The Stone and the Crucifixion: Faulkner's *Light in August*," *The Kenyon Review,* 10:539-551, Autumn, 1948.

Appearance, event, and character are repeatedly represented in images from physics. The images of line and curve are extended into one of the central images of the book: flight and pursuit. Motion and motionlessness are ways of indicating polarity of character, and the final denouement can be viewed as the resolution of several kinds of motion. The codes by which modern man lives set up a pattern which he compulsively, and in fear, clings to, but which inevitably result in his emasculation.

The problem of assuming responsibility for moral intervention in human affairs which confronts Bunch and Hightower has affinities with the dilemma that faces many of Hawthorne's characters, and Faulkner's symbols, themes, and imagery are reminiscent of Melville—which reinforces the view that Faulkner is more than an exclusively Southern writer. *Light in August* shows that Faulkner is capable of very fine fictional constructions, but it indicates, too, a failure to control consciously much of his thematic and symbolic material. (J.C.)

Faulkner, William. "Sherwood Anderson: An Appreciation," *The Atlantic Monthly,* 191 No. 6:27-29, June, 1953.

Sherwood Anderson was a "one- or two-book man," but he was devoted to writing. He developed and was dedicated to an "exactitude of purity, or . . . purity of exactitude," but had actually nothing else to write. His integrity, and belief in the necessity of integrity, compelled him to continue writing. Faulkner says that he learned from Anderson not only the importance of a pure syle, but that a writer must first of all "be what he is—what he was born." (M.M.M.)

Gordon, Caroline, "Notes on Faulkner and Flaubert," *The Hudson Review,* 1:222-231, Summer, 1948.

Flaubert created a new method of writing fiction: creating solidity of detail by having sense impressions rest upon and sustain one another. James carried Flaubert's purpose one step further in the continuing effort to present more life-like illusion. He conveys movement by having his characters exist in terms of one another and by making the act of perception by one of the characters an important part of the drama. In Faulkner's novels the one who perceives, the "watcher," is an *actor* as well. Faulkner accomplishes this by being more like Flaubert, however, than James.

His intimate knowledge of the locale for his stories enables him to support his lyricism with a solid underpinning of concrete historical detail. Narrative comment can be indulged in and can cause a further revolution in the thing-observed. These considerations help explain the successful technique of a story like "Spotted Horses." (J.C.)

Hershleifer, Phyllis, "As Whirlwinds in the South: *Light in August,*" *Perspective,* 2:225-238, Summer, 1949.

The central characters are not only separated from family and social context, but also purposefully isolated by Faulkner's narrative technique—especially by his disruption of a straightforward time sequence. The dramatic intensity and unity of the novel, however, is established through the use of striking and complex parallels of imagery and situation. The two groups of characters—Christmas, Hightower, Miss Burden, McEachern, Grimm opposed to Lena and Byron—represent the doomed generality and a faithful remnant still capable of love. The central theme, man's inhumanity to man and consequent ruin, is seen historically in terms of slavery and the Civil War and personally as violence between men and revulsion between man and woman, symbolic of the rejection of divine love. (M.H.)

Hudson, Tommy, "William Faulkner: Mystic and Traditionalist," *Perspective,* 3:227-235, Autumn, 1950.

Faulkner's mystic belief in spiritual realities accounts for much of his rhetorical exaggeration and violence of character and action: he needs to present these as larger than life to make tragic moral issues vital in the contemporary world. His traditionalism is based on belief in a fixed moral order, necessary if the individual is to act effectively. The dilemma of the Negro and the South most clearly shows God's curse on a society which has broken that order. Because mysticism and traditionalism are opposed to the values accepted by materialistic society, which infects even his "good" characters with Snopesism, Faulkner seems to see little hope. This hopelessness concerning the present accounts for a didactic statement like *Intruder in the Dust.* (M.H.)

Kazin, Alfred, "Faulkner: The Rhetoric and the Agony," *The Virginia Quarterly Review,* 18, Summer, 1942. (reprinted in Mr. Kazin's book, *On Native Grounds,* New York, Harcourt, 1942.)

Faulkner's "epic opulence, profligate rhetoric and Poe-like tension" conceal the fact that he has no clear conception of the South: admiration, acceptance and disgust operate together. Because love and hate have been inextricably fused in his mind his writing records a struggle of the will against itself. His great

imaginative energy, technical subtlety and ambition, his real formal experimentalism, spring from psychic tension, not from a conscious criticism of society or conduct. The problem facing the student of Faulkner is the gap between technical purpose and intensity and looseness and passivity of meaning. His technical energy and "tonal suggestiveness" have made it possible to read and prove every point of view in Faulkner's work. But even his greatest moments illustrate "greatness moving in a void" as his rhetoric remains the "articulation of confusion." (M.H.)

Levin, Harry, "Some European Views of Contemporary American Literature," in *The American Writer and the European Tradition,* ed. by Denny and Gilman, University of Minnesota Press, 1950, pp. 168-184.

The response to our literature in England, Russia, and France is common only in the inclination each displays to see their problems reflected in our mirrors. This inevitably leads to exaggerations on the part of their critics. In France, for example, where American literature has been enthusiastically embraced, Andre Malraux, acting with Gide's advice, reads William Faulkner and Dashiell Hammet with equal attention; and in Russia, where most of contemporary American literature has been repulsed, Faulkner and Henry Miller celebrate the decadence of our culture and the decay of our society. Yet, once the ground from which these critics operate is known, we can learn from their exaggerations: England can teach us something about cultural responsibility, Russia about the mysterious allegiances issuing from ideology, and France can enlarge our critical perspective by lending a universal and moral scope to the issues confronting our writers. (J.C.)

Sanchez-Riva, Arturo, "William Faulkner, *Luz de Agosto,*" *Sur,* 12:75-77, November, 1942.

None of the characters in "Light in August," none of Faulkner's characters for that matter, wrestles with the surrounding reality. They simply go by without even turning to look back. They do not enmesh with the evanescence of the moment. They are time bombs bound to explode at the determined instant. They are ancient dinosaurs dragging the drowsiness of millennia in their slow march towards the banks of the Mississippi. The reader refuses to accept the gratuitous act of submission in which the fly-like character slowly and blindly falls into his cobweb-like destiny. Faulkner puts his creatures in the inclined plane of tragedy, and when the reader feels like stopping their inevitable fall he finds himself paralyzed. Faulkner, who neglects nothing, has previously gagged and tied him. (R.J-P.)